

State of Connecticut

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Testimony Before the Human Services Committee State Comptroller Nancy Wyman February 17, 2009

Good Morning Chairman Doyle, Chairman Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Gibbons and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am State Comptroller Nancy Wyman and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on House Bill 6400, "~~An~~ **Act Concerning the Strengthening of Nursing Home Oversight.**"

I appreciate the committee's efforts to strengthen the financial oversight of nursing homes here in Connecticut by proposing this legislation. Every resident of this state is effected by either the care *or* costs associated with our nursing home industry.

The family and friends of nursing home patients trust that their loved ones are provided with the highest quality care in a safe and reliable setting. In many cases the quality of care given to patients is directly linked to the financial management of the institution. Nursing homes that are fiscally un-healthy have potentially disastrous consequences for the clients who rely on their services.

Connecticut tax payers also expect that their money is being spent in the most efficient and cost effective manner. Our state ranks 4th in the nation in nursing home expenditures with \$1.3 billion tax dollars spent each year on care. The public demands that we, as elected officials, enact real oversight over a sizeable industry that makes up a significant percentage of our budget.

Nursing home residents deserve proper care and taxpayers ought to have the comfort of knowing that their money is properly being spent.

It is important that we all work together to craft and implement legislation that delivers the most effective oversight of these care facilities. Through the combined efforts of this committee and the Attorney General's office we can provide a sound framework for developing comprehensive transparency and regulation of the nursing home industry.

The proposal before you today will help to hold Connecticut's nursing homes financially accountable. As we look at the transgressions committed by nursing homes we can model a blue print for creating a comprehensive model of oversight in this state. We know that we must create a system that empowers our regulators and clamps down on the big businesses that manage many of these homes.

HB 6400 adds the Comptroller to the Nursing Home Advisory Committee and calls for the Committee to meet quarterly with legislative leaders. While I applaud the intent to revive this authority, I ask this Committee to work together to give them more influence and autonomy to monitor the system.

The state's role should not be to clean up after the irresponsible or potentially criminal financial administration of nursing home owners. Connecticut must take a proactive stance in preventing the devastating costs of mismanagement before it happens.

Thank you.